

STATISTICAL DATA COLLECTION IN MAURITIUS

Organisational Framework

The Central Statistics Office (CSO), which was set up in 1945, is the official organisation responsible for the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of all official statistics relating to all aspects of the economic and social activities of the country. By virtue of the Statistics Act 2000, the CSO is the central depository for all statistics produced in Mauritius. Section 5(c) of the Act stipulates that the Director "shall co-ordinate and monitor statistical activities in all ministries and government departments, local authorities and other statutory bodies" with a view to ensuring, among other things, that approved statistical standards and procedures are applied. Currently there are two ministries which have developed their own statistical systems. These are the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security (Fisheries Division).

Organisations involved in data collection

Statistical data collection in Mauritius is not restricted to the CSO and government ministries and departments. A number of non-government organisations are also actively engaged in statistical data production for their own internal purposes and/or for servicing other organisations, including ministries and government departments. Foremost among them is the University of Mauritius which often conducts surveys and studies, either as part of its own research activities or on behalf of other bodies.

The Centre for Applied Social Research (CASR), a joint initiative of the University of Mauritius and the Mauritius Research Council, was set up in 2001 to undertake research in areas pertinent to the development of Mauritius embracing academic, public policy and economic objectives. The flagship study of the centre is the Mauritius Social Attitudes Survey which provides barometric measures on such issues as financial well-being and stability, access to financial services, employment, health, education, inequality, family dynamics, local environment, social network and capital and other socio-demographic and economic variables.

The Bank of Mauritius, which is responsible for balance of payments, also produces a wide range of monetary and banking statistics such as reserve money, monetary ratios, circulation of money, commercial banks' assets and liabilities and inter-bank transactions.

Many research institutes or private firms conduct surveys.

Business organisations such as Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mauritius Sugar Syndicate, Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture and Mauritius Employers' Federation have their own system of data collection for their respective fields of interest.

Some non-profit institutions also produce statistics from their administrative records and conduct surveys from time to time on subjects of topical interest or current concern. Foremost among these NGOs is the Mauritius Family Planning Association which has carried out studies on abortion and AIDS-related risk behaviour in Mauritius.

Data sources

The main sources used by CSO to obtain information for the compilation of official statistics are: (a) censuses, (b) sample surveys and (c) administrative records.

(a) Censuses

Censuses provide first hand primary data at source and Mauritius has a long history in the taking of censuses.

Censuses are conducted at regular intervals to provide up to date data at low spatial level for planners and decision makers. They also provide data for benchmarking purposes. The results provide sampling frames for the conduct of other sample surveys.

(b) Sample Surveys

The CSO has a regular programme of sample surveys covering household and enterprise income and expenditure and labour force. These surveys are conducted at periodic intervals and provide an important source of data to planners. Furthermore, in order to address the demand for more social indicators, a Continuous Multipurpose Household Survey has been conducted since the year 1999 and is meant to be an on-going exercise covering various topics of interest.

(c) Administrative records

As a result of their routine administrative activities, most ministries and government departments generate various types of information that can be used as primary sources for statistics, depending on their relevance, consistency, coverage, completeness and accuracy. The main organisations whose record systems are exploited routinely to yield substantial statistical output are:

- Agricultural Research and Extension Unit of the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security (Foodcrop statistics)
- Albion Fisheries Research Centre of the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security (Fisheries statistics)
- Central Electricity Board of the Ministry of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Electricity statistics)
- Central Water Authority of the Ministry of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Water statistics)
- Civil Status Division of the Prime Minister's Office (Vital statistics)
- Customs Department of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (Trade statistics)
- Income Tax Department of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (Income Tax statistics)
- Information and Communication Technology Authority (ICT statistics)
- Judiciary Department (Judiciary statistics)
- Mauritius Police Force (Police and Victimisation statistics)
- Mauritius Prison Services (Prisons statistics)
- Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources (Education statistics)
- Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit (Environment statistics)
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Government Finance statistics)
- Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands (Licensing statistics)

- Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions (Pension Contributions and Benefits)
- Ministry of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (statistics of International Travel and Tourism)
- National Transport Authority and Road Transport & Traffic Management Unit (Road Transport and Road Traffic Accident statistics)
- Passport and Immigration Office (statistics of International Travel and Tourism)
- VAT Department of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (VAT statistics)

Problems of data collection

(a) Response problems

In spite of this provision, however, there are always some respondents who feel reluctant to provide data requested by the CSO. The main reasons for this reluctance are twofold: on the one hand there is the response burden imposed on respondents who have to make special efforts and find the time to assemble the information, and on the other there is the fear that the data may be used for purposes other than statistical, especially taxation.

Because of these restrictions, CSO assists ministries and government departments to collect data under their own legislation. Besides, the Statistics Act 2000 makes provision for the joint collection of data by the Central Statistics Office and any other ministry, government department, local authority or statutory body.

(b) Other problems

Many research institutes or private firms are conducting surveys for market research or opinion polls, thus increasing the burdens on would be respondents who may be selected in more than one survey at a time. Some people may not be able to differentiate between questionnaires for an official survey conducted by the CSO and those carried out by private organisations.

Data collected from administrative sources are not devoid of problems. The forms and documents which have been established independently of the CSO, may lead to inconsistencies and incomplete coverage. Besides, these organisations may be using non-standard definitions and methods and this necessitates careful putting together to have meaningful statistics.

DATA DISSEMINATION

Introduction

Official statistics were initially published in a "Yearbook of Statistics", which first appeared in 1946. The publication of this Yearbook was discontinued in 1959 and was replaced by a Quarterly Digest of Statistics as from 1961. The periodicity of this Digest was subsequently reduced to biannual as from 1966 and finally to an annual one (the Annual Digest of Statistics) as from 1984. At the same time a number of specialised digests covering specific domains were started, while the present Economic and Social Indicators became regular features as from 1984.

Presently, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) disseminates, both in hard and soft copies, its data through the following publications:

- Digests of Statistics
- Economic and Social Indicators (ESIs)
- Ad-hoc reports
- Mauritius in Figures

These publications are printed with the support of the Government Printer and are distributed free of charge to ministries and government departments. Economic and Social Indicators and other publications are on sale at the office, located in the LIC Building, J. Kennedy Street, Port Louis.

The CSO also disseminates data solely on its website through the following:

- Monthly Consumer Price Index
- Monthly Trade Statistics
- Monthly Social Security Statistics
- a "Tableau de Bord", which contains a selection of main statistics produced by the Office, the Bank of Mauritius and the Stock of Exchange of Mauritius, is updated monthly
- National Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) database (54 indicators)
- United Nations MDG database (60 indicators)
- Quarterly Wage Rate Index

A Press Communiqué on each ESI on the day it is released on the website is sent to the Government Information Service for onward submission to the local media.

Digest of Statistics

The digests are mostly annual publications covering various topics. They are meant to bring together in a single volume all data pertaining to a given subject matter. Besides the Annual Digest of Statistics which generally covers the whole spectrum of statistics produced by CSO, the office also publishes separate annual digests covering the following domains, the figure in brackets showing the year in which the digest first appeared:

- Labour (1966)
- International Travel & Tourism (1974)
- External Trade (1977)

- National Accounts (1983)
- Education (1984)
- Agriculture (1984)
- Industry (1984)
- Road Transport and Road Accident (1984)
- Demography (1985)
- Public Finance (1988)
- Rodrigues (1994)
- Business Activity (1997)
- Productivity and Competitiveness Indicators (1998)
- Energy and Water (1998)
- Environment (2002)
- Social Security (2002)
- Crime, Justice and Security (2009)

Economic and Social Indicators

In its endeavour to make data available to users within the shortest possible delay, the CSO publishes "Economic and Social Indicators" covering various sectors. These indicators, which are mostly quarterly publications, are designed to rapidly disseminate the main statistical data pending the publication of the detailed digests or reports.

Each year, around 67 Economic and Social Indicators are released and they cover around 27 subjects on various socio-economic sectors. All these indicators are available on the internet at the following address:

<http://statsmauritius.gov.mu>

Ad-hoc publications

Ad-hoc reports follow mainly the completion or part completion of censuses and surveys, or availability of other sources of data. The results of censuses and surveys conducted by the Office are disseminated through two types of reports: one containing mainly statistical tables and another one dealing with the methodological aspects and analysis of the data. Examples of these reports are:

- Household Budget Survey
- Poverty Analysis
- Census of Economic Activity
- Agricultural Cost of Production Survey
- Housing and Population Census

Other means of data dissemination

Besides the above-mentioned print publications, the CSO releases the annual publication "Mauritius in Figures" which presents the main statistics in a pocket sized format. It is produced in 2200 copies and is made available free of charge to users.

Future plans

The CSO started to implement an e-Business Plan in 2008 and is expected to be completed in 2012 and it intends to review its web portal and improve its website to make it more interactive and user friendly.

The e-Business Plan will also encompass the Geographical Information System (GIS) project which is to be implemented at the CSO in 2010. The GIS tools will allow users to create interactive queries in a user friendly manner.

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